

Kenyan Curriculum and Self-reliance: A Decolonizing Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Education is meant to develop capacity and enable members of society to become productive. African indigenous education systems inculcated self-reliance among members of society and every individual had a specific defined role within the society. The colonial education system introduced the aspects of unemployment, underemployment and job seekers. In an effort to address growing mismatch between expectations by graduates and societal employment provisions, the government has regularly formed commissions and made reforms in the education system. Despite these efforts there has been growing concerns on the effectiveness of the current education system to inculcate self-reliance among graduates. This study sought to establish the influence of decolonizing the Kenyan education system on self-reliance among students. The study was carried out in universities in Kenya. This study utilized the descriptive survey design and the correlational research design. A sample size of 384 respondents made up of 60 members of teaching faculty and 324 fourth year bachelor of education students was selected to participate in the study. Data collection was done using questionnaires and interview schedules. Descriptive statistics was used for measures of central tendencies including mean, standard deviation and coefficient of variation. Inferential statistics through correlation analysis using the Pearson's coefficient of correlation was applied to measure the degree of influence of decolonizing curriculum on self-reliance. To test hypothesis, simple linear and multiple regression models were used to test significance between independent and dependent variable. Qualitative data from interviews was organized into themes, categories and patterns pertinent to the study. The study found that the contemporary Kenyan curriculum influenced self-reliance to a moderate extent and that integration of selected elements of African indigenous curriculum was capable of improving the Kenyan curriculum to a large extent. It was concluded that decolonizing curriculum had a statistically significant relationship with self-reliance among students in the Kenyan education system

Key words: self-reliance, decolonization, curriculum, indigenous knowledge, integrating, anti-colonial

Introduction

The proponents of the 8-4-4 systems argued that it was relevant for the needs of the nation or it would meet the national demands for self-employment and self-reliance (Ambaa, 2015). The school curriculum adopted for 8-4-4 included learning opportunities which were meant to enable pupils to acquire a suitable basic foundation for the world of work in the context of economic and manpower needs of the nation, and to appreciate and respect the dignity of labor (Eshiwani 1993). To achieve the stated objectives, three subjects were emphasized as being of special importance:

Art and Craft, Agriculture and Home Science. Art and Craft education featured content areas such as collage and mosaic, drawings, paintings, graphic design, clay and pottery, leatherwork, modeling and carving; fabric design, puppetry, wood work and metalwork. Learners in these courses were expected to produce functional and aesthetically appealing articles (Ambaa, 2015). Ideally, pupils were supposed to use the acquired knowledge and skills in order to design, implement and control small scale projects that would provide opportunities for self-reliance for both the learner and other members of the community (Eshiwani, 1993)

Other subjects introduced through 8-4-4 with the aim of training pupils for self-reliance were Agriculture and Home science. In Agriculture the learner was expected to acquire practical skills such as growing of vegetables, learning about domestic animals; poultry and bee keeping, making farm tools and caring for the soil and the environment (Eshiwani, 1993). Home science, which the syllabus defines as the study of home and family living within the environment, was designed to develop and apply knowledge, skills, principles and attitudes which would help the learner to relate better to the social and economic realities of the community and the country (Ambaa, 2015). Its specific objectives were to give pupils basic knowledge useful in promoting the welfare of the home and family and setting standards for community living. The subject comprised three areas of learning namely, home management, clothing and textiles and food and nutrition while business education was meant to equip learners with entrepreneurship skills. However, these subjects were eventually given less prominence in the primary school curriculum remaining only as non-examinable subjects at this level (Karanja, 2008).

Various studies have been carried out examining the 8-4-4 education system with regard to its goal of producing self-reliant individuals for the Kenyan society. Ambaa (2015) observed that while the 8-4-4 system curriculum allowed for more options in technical and vocational subjects, it experienced serious shortages or lack of essential resources and facilities and the local communities could not be mobilized to provide the facilities required. This is also emphasized by Amutabi (2003) who noted that that 8-4-4 encountered numerous challenges such as lack of involvement of relevant stakeholders, infrastructures such as classrooms, workshops, curriculum, trained personnel, literature and pedagogy. This indicates that the goal of training graduates for self-reliance through introduction of a vocational oriented curriculum was bound to fail since the

new curriculum required many facilities for practical subjects such as art and craft, agriculture, music and home science which were not available. Kenya has continued to grapple with the problem of production of graduates and school leavers who lack the basic capacity to be self-reliant and live their lives independently. There is growing economic dependency among the youth of Kenya.

Kenya started the process of overhauling its education system for the first time in 32 years in January 2018. The 8-4-4 system of education that the country has been operating on and whose guiding philosophy was education for self-reliance will gradually be replaced by the competency based 2-6-6-3 curriculum. Part of the reasons behind this huge overhaul is the realisation that Kenya isn't doing enough to produce school-leavers who are ready for the world of work (Sifuna, 2016). The government's own assessments have showed that the current system isn't flexible. It struggles to respond to individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The Kenya Institute of Education produced an evaluation report about the 8-4-4 system in 2008 which identified several weaknesses with the system of education: It found that the system was very academic and examination oriented; the curriculum was overloaded; most schools were not able to equip their pupils with practical skills and many teachers also weren't sufficiently trained (Sifuna, 2016). In this sense, the 8-4-4 system could be said to have failed in its core aim of preparing all learners to be self-reliant.

The core aim of the 8-4-4 system from its inception was to prepare learners to be self-reliant individuals. The content of the curriculum was arranged so as to impart vocational type of skills to learners, with the hope of preparing them to be self-reliant. However, it is observed that the 8-4-4 was hurriedly implemented, without adequate consultation and involvement of stakeholders, provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure and training of teachers for implementing the new curriculum (Sifuna, 2016; Ambaa, 2015, Simiyu, 2001; Amutabi, 2003; Eshiwani, 1993; RoK, 1988). Parallels have been drawn between the manner in which the 8-4-4 education system was introduced and the way the 2-6-6-3 system was introduced at the beginning of 2018. Sifuna (2016) raised concerns over the cost of the new curriculum and the extent to which teachers and other implementers of the curriculum were prepared for the new curriculum approach. Kenya continues to produce graduates at all levels of education who lack knowledge, skills and attitude to rely on

themselves and dependency levels continue to be a major challenge to the economy of this country. Not much attention has been paid to the role played by colonialism and the legacy of colonial education as well as the adoption of a Eurocentric type of curriculum after independence.

This study sought to deconstruct the Kenyan education system with regard to its role in inculcating self-reliance among students. Based on the gaps identified in the literature review, the researcher situated this study in the Anti-colonial theoretical framework in order to fill the gaps. Education in the African indigenous dimension trained all members of society through its curriculum, pedagogical approach, learning environment and evaluation to be self-reliant. However, colonization and introduction of a Eurocentric type of education had long lasting effects on education for Africans. This study sought to explore the influence of integrating aspects of indigenous curriculum in Africa into the contemporary Kenyan education in order to inculcate knowledge, skills and the spirit of self-reliance among learners.

Results and Discussions

The objective of this study was to determine the extent to which decolonizing curriculum promotes self-reliance among students in the Kenyan education system. A decolonizing curriculum was conceived in terms of integrating aspects of African indigenous curriculum into the contemporary Kenyan curriculum. Two sets of items were included in the questionnaire to measure the variety of subjects taught, content of subjects taught, and choice of subjects by the learner as well as the source/origin of content taught in both the contemporary Kenyan education system and in the indigenous African education system.

Contemporary Curriculum

The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with selected statements about the Kenyan education system. Selected statements capture indicators of a curriculum which according to literature reviewed would be associated with self-reliance. They were given fourteen items rated on a five point Likert scale ranging from: of **SD** – Strongly Disagree; **D** – Disagree; **N** – Neutral; **A** – Agree; and **SA** – Strongly Agree from which to choose. The findings are presented in Table 1

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages on Contemporary Curriculum

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Curriculum focuses on community-centred knowledge and skills	74 (19.3%)	122 (31.8%)	69 (18%)	95 (24.7%)	24 (6.25%)
Music and drama are highly encouraged in educational institutions	65 (16.9%)	100 (26.0%)	69 (18.0%)	102 (26.6%)	48 (12.5%)
Students have ample time to participate in communal programmes	72 (18.8%)	155 (40.4%)	78 (20.3%)	58 (15.1%)	21 (5.5%)
Technical subjects feature prominently in the education system	73 (19.0%)	112 (29.2%)	57 (14.8%)	89 (23.2%)	53 (13.8%)
Subjects in the education system enable learners to explore their creativity	55 (14.3%)	98 (25.5%)	64 (16.7%)	111 (28.9%)	56 (14.6%)
Content of curriculum enables students to develop their potential and talents.	55 (14.3%)	96 (25.0%)	71 (18.5%)	105 (27.3%)	57 (14.8%)
There's a wide variety of subjects provided in the education system	29 (7.6%)	55 (14.3%)	42 (10.9%)	151 (39.3%)	107 (27.9%)
Students are exposed to a work-oriented curriculum	68 (17.7%)	111 (28.9%)	65 (16.9%)	88 (22.9%)	52 (13.5%)
Subjects taught in the education system enable students develop strong self-esteem	36 (9.4%)	95 (24.7%)	89 (23.2%)	104 (27.1%)	60 (15.1%)
Content of curriculum nurtures spirit of independence	40 (10.4%)	110 (28.6%)	82 (21.4%)	115 (29.9%)	37 (9.6%)
Choice of subjects to study is not entirely made by learners	55 (14.3%)	71 (18.5%)	61 (15.9%)	122 (31.8%)	75 (19.8%)
Content of subjects taught in educational institutions is derived from the immediate/local environment	90 (23.4%)	125 (32.6%)	73 (19.0%)	68 (17.7%)	28 (7.3%)
Kenyan curriculum exposes learners to the world of work	63 (16.4%)	92 (24.0%)	81 (21.1%)	102 (26.6%)	46 (12.0%)
Students are presented with a challenging curriculum designed to develop independent thinking.	65 (16.9%)	91 (23.7%)	70 (18.2%)	89 (23.2%)	69 (18.0%)

Analysis of the results in Table 1 on the contemporary curriculum, reveal that majority of the respondents disagree that in the Kenyan education system, the curriculum focuses on community-centred knowledge and skills(31.8%), students have ample time to participate in communal programmes (40.4%), technical subjects feature prominently in the education system (29.2%),

students are exposed to a work-oriented curriculum (28.9%), content of subjects taught in educational institutions is derived from the immediate environment(32.6%) and that students are presented with a challenging curriculum designed to develop independent thinking (23.7%).

A majority of respondents agreed that music and drama are highly encouraged in education institutions (26.6%), there is a wide variety of subjects provided in the education system according to the majority of respondents (39.3%), that subjects in the education system enable learners to explore their creativity (28.9%), content curriculum enables students to develop their potential talents (27.3%) content of curriculum nurtures the spirit of independence (29.9%), Subjects taught in the education system enable students develop strong self-esteem (27.1%) and that Kenyan curriculum exposes learners to the world of work (26.6%).

The frequencies presented on Table 1 show that the majority of the respondents disagreed about the presence of curriculum aspects that would promote self-reliance among students in the Kenyan education system. The findings in this study are supported by other studies on curriculum in Kenya which found that although the 8-4-4 system of education was designed to prepare learners for a life of self-reliance through inculcating in them skills that would lead to self-employment; the implementation of this curriculum has been largely ineffective. Simiyu (2001) found that although the 8-4-4 system curriculum provided for more options in technical and vocational subjects, training in these areas did not bear the expected results since there were no trained technical and vocational subjects teachers and local craftsmen could not be used. Amutabi (2003) found that the Kenyan education system was theoretically oriented due to lack of infrastructure and therefore did not adequately provide learners with adequate skills for self-reliance. According to Owino (1997) vocational subjects and activities introduced in the 8-4-4 curriculum to provide students with skills for self-reliance were viewed by teachers and students as an extra burden both in practical daily activities in schools and in national examination.

African Indigenous Curriculum

Decolonizing the curriculum involves integration of African indigenous curriculum elements into the contemporary Kenyan curriculum. Respondents were requested to rate the extent to which integrating of selected elements of the indigenous African curriculum could enhance the Kenyan education

system using a scale of **NE** – To no extent ;**SE** – To a small extent; **N** – Neutral; **LE** – To a large extent; and **VLE** – To a very large extent; The findings are presented on Table 2

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages on Decolonizing curriculum

Statement	NE	SE	N	LE	VLE
Aligning content to immediate needs of society	22 (5.7%)	57 (14.8%)	57 (14.8%)	142 (37.0%)	106 (27.6%)
Teaching subjects that develop practical skills	17 (4.4%)	43 (11.2%)	49 (12.8%)	122 (31.8%)	153 (39.8%)
Teaching subjects that emphasize hands-on experiences	18 (4.7%)	38 (9.9%)	60 (15.6%)	131 (34.1%)	137 (35.7%)
Emphasizing on individual talents in the choice of subjects	29 (7.6%)	50 (13.0%)	39 (10.2%)	103 (26.8%)	162 (42.2%)
Teaching subjects that promote creativity among learners	16 (4.2%)	45 (11.7%)	47 (12.2%)	124 (32.3%)	152 (39.6%)
Presenting learners with a curriculum that instills skills to exploit their immediate environment	20 (5.2%)	47 (12.2%)	48 (12.5%)	123 (32.0%)	146 (38.0%)
Focusing on the local environment as the main source of content for the curriculum	42 (10.9%)	65 (16.9%)	47 (12.2%)	118 (30.7%)	112 (29.2%)
Integrating objectives of African indigenous education in the curriculum	32 (8.3%)	81 (21.1%)	66 (17.2%)	116 (30.2%)	89 (23.2%)
Involvement of local communities in curriculum development	39 (10.2%)	66 (17.2%)	58 (15.1%)	109 (28.4%)	112 (29.2%)

Analysis of results in Table 1 indicates that “teaching subjects that develop practical skills” was rated as useful to a very large extent by majority of the respondents (39.8%). Other elements of the indigenous African curriculum rated by the majority of respondents as useful to a very large extent include: teaching subjects that emphasize hands-on experiences (35.7%), Emphasizing of individual talents in the choice of subjects (42.2%), Teaching subjects that promote creativity among learners (39.6%), presenting learners with a curriculum that instills skills to exploit their immediate environment (38.0%) and involvement of local communities in curriculum development (29.2%). African indigenous curriculum elements rated as useful to a large extent by majority of the respondents include: aligning content to immediate needs of society (37.0%), integrating objectives if of African indigenous education in the curriculum (30.2 %) and focusing on the local environment as the main source of content for the curriculum (30.7%).

The findings in this study confirm the assertion by Omolewa (2007) that following the indigenous African model of teaching, it is wise to start with the knowledge about the local area, which students are familiar with, and then gradually move to the knowledge about regional, national and global environments. Omolewa further observed that indigenous people have developed enormous volumes of knowledge over the centuries about different subject matters especially in the areas of informal and vocational training, where each person in the community is practically trained and prepared for his/her role in society. Ambaa (2015) also reported that teaching in learning institutions in Kenya should be related to one's interest and experience and as a result, the inherent abilities that individuals possess will be developed which may be vital in realizing self-reliance as an aim of education.

Correlation Analysis for Curriculum and Self-reliance

The Pearson's Product Moment technique was used to carry out Correlational analysis to determine the relationship between indicators of contemporary Kenyan curriculum, indigenous African curriculum, decolonized (integrated) curriculum and self-reliance. It was meant to identify the strength and direction of the association between the indicators of these variables. Values of correlation coefficient range from -1 and +1. A correlation coefficient of +1 indicates that the two variables are perfectly and positively related in a linear sense, while -1 shows that the two variables are perfectly related but in a negative linear sense. Hair et al (2006) observe that correlation coefficient (r) ranging from 0.81 to 1.0 is very strong; from 0.61 to 0.80 is strong; from 0.41 to 0.60 is moderate; from 0.21 to 0.40 is weak; and from 0.00 to 0.20 indicates no relationship. The results are presented on Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation Analysis of Curriculum and Self-reliance

		Contemporary Curriculum	Decolonizing Curriculum	Self-reliance
Contemporary Curriculum	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	384		
Decolonizing Curriculum	Pearson Correlation	.869**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
	N	384	384	

Self-reliance	Pearson Correlation	.786**	.736**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	384	384	384

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results on Table 3 indicate a strong positive and significant correlation between the indicators of the contemporary curriculum and self-reliance ($r=786$, $p\text{-value } 0.000 < 0.01$). There is also a strong positive and significant correlation between the decolonizing curriculum (integrated curriculum) and self-reliance ($r=736$, $p\text{-value } 0.000 < 0.01$).

Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing for Decolonizing Curriculum and Self-reliance

The objective of the study was to determine the extent to which decolonizing curriculum promotes self-reliance among students in the Kenyan education system. A decolonizing curriculum was conceived in terms of integrating elements of African indigenous curriculum into the contemporary Kenyan curriculum. The measures of the curriculum comprised the variety of subjects taught, content of subjects taught, and choice of subjects by the learner as well as the source/origin of content taught in both the contemporary education system and in the indigenous African education systems. Respondents had been asked to indicate the extent to which the Kenyan education system focused on the selected curriculum dimensions. Respondents were also asked to rate the usefulness of integrating the curriculum dimensions conceived from an African indigenous perspective into the Kenyan education system. Self-reliance measures were composed of attitude, creativity, responsibility, autonomy, hard work, confidence in own capabilities and self-esteem. To determine the relationship between decolonizing curriculum and self-reliance, the following hypothesis was tested.

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between decolonizing curriculum and self-reliance among students in the Kenyan education system.

The regression results are presented on Table 4.

Table 4

Regression Analysis of Curriculum and Self-reliance

a). Goodness of Fit

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Contemporary	.786 ^a	0.617	0.616	0.40308
Decolonizing	.736 ^a	0.542	0.541	0.44091

b).The Overall Significance of the Model

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Contemporary	Regression	100.113	1	100.113	616.185	.000 ^b
	Residual	62.065	382	0.162		
	Total	162.178	383			
Decolonizing	Regression	87.918	1	87.918	452.256	.000 ^b
	Residual	74.260	382	0.194		
	Total	162.178	383			

c).The Individual Significance of the Model

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
Contemporary	(Constant)	0.506	0.117		4.340	0.000
	Curriculum	0.827	0.033	0.786	24.823	0.000
Decolonizing	(Constant)	-0.050	0.162		-0.312	0.755
	Curriculum	0.936	0.044	0.736	21.266	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Self-Reliance

The results in Table 4 show that decolonizing curriculum had a statistically significant relationship with self-reliance. The coefficient of determination is 0.617 for the contemporary curriculum and 0.542 for the Decolonized curriculum. This suggests that 61.7% of variation in Self-reliance is explained by the contemporary curriculum. In addition, Decolonizing curriculum explained 54.2% of variation in self-reliance. On the basis of this result the study revealed that Decolonizing curriculum has marginal significance towards self-reliance.

Results on Table 4 further reveal that the contemporary curriculum significantly influenced self-reliance with F Statistic =616.185 and a P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. Similarly, the decolonized curriculum, with an F statistic=452.256 and a P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ was also shown as having significant relationship with self-reliance. This implies that the model is statistically significant at 5% level of significance.

The results on Table 4 also reveal that the contemporary curriculum was considered statistically significant with a regression coefficient of 0.827, a t-value of 24.823 and a P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This suggests that one unit change in the contemporary curriculum corresponds to increase in self-reliance by a factor of 0.827. Further, the study reveals that there exists a significant relationship between decolonizing curriculum and self-reliance at 5% level of significance (regression coefficient=0.936, P-value $0.000 < 0.05$). This implies that for one unit change in decolonizing curriculum, there is an increase in self-reliance by a factor of 0.936.

In conclusion the study revealed that the current curriculum and the decolonizing curriculum contributed significantly towards self-reliance. The Null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between decolonizing curriculum and self-reliance is not supported in the current study. The regression model for the prediction of self –reliance can be stated as follows:

$$Y = 0.506 + 0.827X_{11}$$

$$Y = 0.936X_1$$

Where:

X_{11} = Contemporary Curriculum

X_1 = Decolonizing Curriculum

Y = Self-reliance

0.506 = Y-intercept (constant). Estimate of expected value of self-reliance when contemporary curriculum is Zero.

0.827 = an estimate of the expected increase in Self-reliance in response to a unit increase in contemporary curriculum

0.936= an estimate of the expected increase in Self-reliance in response to a unit increase in Decolonizing curriculum.

Based on the findings of this study, it was revealed that decolonizing curriculum (with a regression coefficient =0.936) would improve the contemporary curriculum (regression coefficient= 0.827) in promoting self-reliance among students. Although studies on decolonizing curriculum for self-reliance are difficult to find, many studies have been carried out on integration of Indigenous knowledges to contemporary education systems. Since integrating of indigenous knowledges into

contemporary curriculums is part of the efforts to decolonize education, reference can be made on these studies. The results of this study support Hamilton-Ekeke and Dorgu (2015) who posited that since indigenous knowledge was generated from the local wisdom and culture, it fits to the local situation natively and that this knowledge could contribute to solve existing problems and achieving the intended objectives. The findings also supports Omolewa (2007) who observed that integration of traditional education into school curriculum enables schools to act as agencies for transferring the culture of the society from one generation to the next and links the learning process more closely to learners' everyday experience in order to help them to make better sense of what they learn

5.3 Conclusions

Judging from the findings resulting from the data collected for this study, the results reveal some vital facts upon which the conclusions can be drawn. We can conclude from this study that decolonizing the curriculum in the Kenyan education system would have a positive influence on self-reliance among students. The study revealed that decolonizing curriculum through integrating aspects of the indigenous African curriculum had significant relationship with self-reliance among students. Teaching subjects that develop practical skills, those that promote creativity among learners and those that promote hands-on experiences were considered as crucial for promoting self-reliance. Presenting learners with a curriculum that instills skills to exploit their immediate environments was also highly rated in promoting self-reliance.

5.4 Recommendation

Based on the findings of the current study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- i. There is need for curriculum developers to focus more on the learner's immediate environment so as to develop curricula that responds to immediate needs of the learner.
- ii. There is need for curriculum developers to explore ways of developing and designing locally and regionally relevant curricula where focus is on instilling skills and competencies relevant for survival in the learner's immediate environment and to ground them firmly in their own cultures before introducing them to knowledge from other areas and cultures.

- iii. Curriculum planners should be encouraged to help to integrate self-reliance skills modeled along the lines of African indigenous educational practices into contemporary Kenyan education.

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